General Assembly

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Agenda item 43

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*without reference to a Main Committee (A/58/L.20 and Add.1)*]

58/17. Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling its resolutions 3026 A (XXVII) of 18 December 1972, 3148 (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, 3187 (XXVIII) of 18 December 1973, 3391 (XXX) of 19 November 1975, 31/40 of 30 November 1976, 32/18 of 11 November 1977, 33/50 of 14 December 1978, 34/64 of 29 November 1979, 35/127 and 35/128 of 11 December 1980, 36/64 of 27 November 1981, 38/34 of 25 November 1983, 40/19 of 21 November 1985, 42/7 of 22 October 1987, 44/18 of 6 November 1989, 46/10 of 22 October 1991, 48/15 of 2 November 1993, 50/56 of 11 December 1995, 52/24 of 25 November 1997, 54/190 of 17 December 1999 and 56/97 of 14 December 2001,

Recalling also its resolution 56/8 of 21 November 2001, in which it proclaimed 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage,

Recalling further the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, adopted at The Hague on 14 May 1954,[1] and the two Protocols thereto, adopted in 1954 and 1999,

Recalling the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, adopted on 14 November 1970 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,[2]

Recalling also the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted on 16 November 1972 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,[3]

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 249, No. 3511.

[2] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Sixteenth Session, Paris, 12 October-14 November 1970*, vol. 1: *Resolutions*.

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1037, No. 15511.

Recalling further the Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects adopted in Rome on 24 June 1995 by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law,[4]

Taking note of the adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 2 November 2001,[5]

Recalling the Medellin Declaration for Cultural Diversity and Tolerance and the Plan of Action on Cultural Cooperation, adopted at the first Meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Medellin, Colombia, on 4 and 5 September 1997,[6]

Noting the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Action Plan for its implementation, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 2 November 2001,[5]

Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General submitted in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,[7]

Aware of the importance attached by some countries of origin to the return of cultural property that is of fundamental spiritual and cultural value to them, so that they may constitute collections representative of their cultural heritage,

Expressing concern about the illicit traffic in cultural property and its damage to the cultural heritage of nations,

Expressing concern also about the loss, destruction, removal, theft, pillage, illicit movement or misappropriation of and any acts of vandalism or damage directed against cultural property, in particular in areas of armed conflict, including territories that are occupied, whether such conflicts are international or internal,

Recalling Security Council resolution 1483 (2003), adopted on 22 May 2003, in particular paragraph 7 relating to the restitution of the cultural property of Iraq,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation on the work they have accomplished, in particular through the promotion of bilateral negotiations, for the return or restitution of cultural property, the preparation of inventories of movable cultural property and the implementation of the Object-ID standard related thereto, as well as for the reduction of illicit traffic in cultural property and the dissemination of information to the public;

2. *Calls upon* all relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and other relevant intergovernmental organizations to work in coordination with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, within their mandates and in cooperation with Member States, in

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[4] See www.unidroit.org.

[5] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-first Session, Paris, 15 October-3 November 2001*, vol. 1: *Resolutions*.

[6] A/52/432, annex I.

[7] See A/58/314.

order to continue to address the issue of return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin and to provide appropriate support accordingly;

3. *Welcomes* the adoption of the Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 17 October 2003;

4. *Reaffirms* the importance of the principles and provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,[1] and invites Member States that have not already done so to become parties to the Convention and to promote its implementation;

5. *Also reaffirms* the importance of the Second Protocol to the Convention, adopted at The Hague on 26 March 1999, and invites all States Parties to the Convention to consider becoming parties to the Second Protocol;

6. *Welcomes* the most recent efforts made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the protection of the cultural heritage of countries in conflict, including the safe return to those countries of cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific and religious importance that have been illegally removed, and calls upon the international community to contribute to these efforts;

7. *Invites* Member States to consider adopting and implementing the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property;[2]

8. *Urges* Member States to introduce effective national and international measures to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in cultural property, including special training for police, customs and border services;

9. *Reaffirms* the importance of the provisions of the Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law,[4] and invites Member States that have not already done so to consider becoming parties to it;

10. *Invites* Member States, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to continue to draw up systematic inventories of their cultural property, as well as to work towards the creation of a database of the cultural legislation of Member States, in particular in an electronic form;

11. *Reaffirms* the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to promote the use of identification systems, in particular the application of the Object-ID standard, and to encourage the linking of identification systems and existing databases, including the one developed by the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol, to allow for the electronic transmission of information in order to reduce illicit trafficking in cultural property, and encourages the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to make further efforts in this regard in cooperation with Member States, where appropriate;

12. *Recognizes* the public awareness and increased mobilization and action in favour of heritage values that was achieved in 2002, the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, and calls upon the international community and the United Nations to continue to cooperate with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the basis of that work;

13. *Welcomes* the adoption of the International Code of Ethics for Dealers in Cultural Property by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 16 November 1999,[8] and invites those who deal with trade in cultural property and their associations, where they exist, to encourage the implementation of the Code;

14. *Recognizes* the importance of the creation, by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, of the International Fund for the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation, launched in November 2000, and encourages the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to promote the Fund and render it operational;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to cooperate with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in its efforts to bring about the attainment of the objectives of the present resolution;

16. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to submit to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

17. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixtieth session the item entitled "Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin".

68th plenary meeting
3 December 2003

[8] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirtieth Session, Paris, 26 October-17 November 1999*, vol. 1: *Resolutions*.